

THE
Christian's Peculiar Character:
OR,
UNIVERSAL LOVE
THE
Truest MARK of a CHRISTIAN.

AND THE
*Principal Expedient of enjoying True Felicity, not only
in this World, but also in the World to come.*

A
S E R M O N,

PREACH'D AT

*Trinity-Chapel, by Honiton House, in Southmolton, Devon, on January
the 18, being the first Day of the new Calculation, and the first Year of the New-Style.*

By LEWIS SOUTHCOMB, Rector of ROSE-ASH. R

*If a Man say I love GOD, and hateth his Brother, he is a Lye;
for he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he
love GOD, whom he hath not seen? And this Commandment have
we from him, That he who loveth GOD, love his Brother also.
1 John iv. 20, 21.*

*GOD is Love; and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in GOD,
and GOD in him. 1 John iv. 16.*

Anger resteth in the Bosom of Fools. Ecclef. vii. 9.

Into a malicious Soul Wisdom shall not enter. Wisd. i. 4.

Wisdom is a loving Spirit. Wisd. i. 6.

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MDCCLII.

General Order

UNIVERSITY OF
DEDICATION

GEORGE, our most gracious King and
Governor

To his Majesty
GEORGE, Prince of Wales



To the Right Reverend Father in God
GEORGE, Lord Bishop of Exeter

And to my youngest Son
GEORGE, M. A. Curate of Newton Regis
Devon

LEWIS SOUTHCOMB, Rector of Rolle Ash,
first of the Rolle Dean, wishes all Happiness,
Health and Peace most heartily praying
That

T H E
DEDICATION.

To his Sacred Majesty
GEORGE, *our most gracious King and*
Governor.

To his Royal Highness
GEORGE, *Prince of WALES,*

To the Right-reverend Father in God
GEORGE, *Lord Bishop of Exeter,*

And to my youngest Son,
GEORGE, *M. A. Curate of Nymet-Regis,*
Devon.

LEWIS SOUTHCOMB, Rector of *Rose-Ash,*
alias Esse-Rafe, Devon, wishes all *Happiness,*
Health and Peace; most heartily praying,
That

That your Majesty may reign many Years in the Hearts of your Subjects in the *New-Stile*, as you have always done in the *Old*; and may at last leave to them the *Blessing of Peace*.

That your Royal Highness may inherit the Virtues of your *Ancestors*, and be the Joy and Delight of the Kingdom, as *was* your late *illustrious Father*, and as is your *virtuous Mother now*; whom we look upon not only as a *Guardian* to you, but, in you, to the *whole Nation*.

That your Lordship may continue, by your own amiable Example, long to command the Duty and affectionate Love of your Clergy; and to *win the Souls* of your whole Diocese, as you have hitherto done : *And*

That you, my dear Son, may take as great and sincere a Delight in the Duty of your Calling, as I have done for more than 44 Years, and shall continue to do as long as I live : And that you may have an Opportunity to be of greater Service to God and *Religion*,
than

than has ever been in my Power; and let your chiefest Aim be, *The Glory of God*, and the *Salvation of Souls*, as your good *Disposition*, your *Sobriety*, *Chastity*, and *Humility*, will enable you to perform.

Most heartily commending my *Sovereign*, the
Prince, my *Bishop*, and *You*, to the Blessing
and Protection of ALMIGHTY GOD.

Diocese, as you have hitherto done: And
Clergy; and to win the hearts of your whole
the Duty and affectionate Love of your
own amiable Example, long to command
from your Example may be combined by your

AN

And that you may have an opportunity to do as long as I live; and shall continue to do as long as I live; and I have done for more than 44 years; and I hope a Delight in the Duty of your kind; I pray you, my dear Son, may take as great and

A N
E P I S T L E
T O T H E

*Right-reverend Father in God, GEORGE, by
Divine Permission, Lord Bishop of Exeter.*

MY LORD,

I Had no sooner thought on writing a Discourse on *Universal Love*, but it instantly came into my Mind who shou'd be the most proper Person to whom I shou'd inscribe it ; and I have presum'd to do it accordingly.

For your Lordship shews your Clergy so great and good an Example by receiving them with all that paternal *Affection* and *Regard*, with all the *Humanity*, with all the *Affability*, with all the *Courteousness* that can possibly be imagined ; insomuch that your Lordship makes every one easy and well pleas'd, that has the
Honour

Honour of your Conversation, and uneasy at nothing but the Thoughts of leaving it.

This Deportment of your Lordship towards your Clergy, seems to enforce the *New Commandment* of that Master whom you serve, on your Clergy to *love one another*, and this influences your Clergy to diffuse the same good Example throughout your whole Diocese.

Your Lordship well knows that the Primitive Christians were of *one Heart, and of one Soul*; nay, when Christianity had made a considerable Progress in the World, *when as* (says *Justin Martyr*) *the Blood of Christ was yet warm in the Veins of the Apostles and Disciples of our Blessed Saviour*, they were all so entirely united in their *Love and Affection towards each other*, that *Tertullian* remarks on the Admiration of the *Gentiles* invidiously asserting, on the Behalf of the *Christians*, *see how they love one the other*.

How happy wou'd the whole Nation be, wou'd they follow the Example which the *Primitive*

mitive Christians and your Lordship have shewn us!

That your Lordship may long live a Pattern to your *Clergy*, a Pattern to your *Diocese*, and a Pattern to *all that profess the Christian Name*, and at last be recompensed with the *Euge bone serve!* by the God of Love in the Heaven of Heavens, is, and will be, the hearty Prayer of,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's, in all dutiful Obedience,

Jan. 1st, 1752,

LEWIS SOUTHCOMB.

(01)

T H E
Christian's Peculiar Character:
O R,
U N I V E R S A L L O V E
T H E
Truest M A R K of a C H R I S T I A N.

St. John, XIII. 34, 35. *A new Commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you, That ye also love one another. By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another.*

AS Our Blessed Saviour (a) asserts that he came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them, so does this New Commandment of his by no Means detract from the Obligation of the Commandments under the Law, but seems to add a *Lustre* and a *Completion* to them all.

The Commandments under the Law were comprehended in eight Negative ones, and only two Positive ones: The Negative; That we should acknowledge (b) *but one living and true God*; ---that we should not worship him by an (c) *Image*; ---That we should not take his Name in (d) *vain*; that is, upon trifling, frivolous, or no Occasions, nor on any Account whatsoever, but when we pray to him, or confirm the Truth, by his Name, by such as have (e) *Authority* to demand it

(a) St. Matt. v. 17. --- (b) Exod. xx. 2. Artic. 1. --- (c) Exod. xx. 5.
(d) --- 7. --- (e) Artic. xxxiii. ---

from

from us :)---That we should do no (a) Murder :---That we should not commit (b) Adultery :---That we should not (c) steal, (rob, nor any Way defraud our Neighbour :)---That we should not bear (d) false Witness against him, (either by lyng, or relating more than we know, tending to his Disadvantage, in Respect to either his Soul or Body, Goods, or good Name :)---That we should not (e) covet any Thing that is our Neighbour's, but (f) render to all their Dues ;---(g) to Cæsar the Things which are Cæsar's, and to God the Things that are God's, as commanded by the Divine and (h) Human Laws.

The two positive ones are,---(i) To keep holy the Sabbath-Day, and (k) to honour our Parents, (to which there is annex'd a Promise of long Life. Deut. V. 16. Ephel. V. 1. 2.)

All these being duly observ'd, which were prescrib'd under the Law, Our Blessed Saviour adds this new Commandment (by Name) under the Gospel, of loving one another, St. Paul and St. James asserting withal that (l) he that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law.

This new Commandment of our Blessed Saviour's, was one of the last Legacies that he bequeath'd to his Disciples (m) a little before his Death, the Practice of which will make all his Followers (n) happy, till he shall come again the second Time to judge the World, and who will then be the most proper Objects of having the joyful Sentence pronounc'd to each of them, (o) Well done good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord,

From the Words of my Text I shall observe,

I. The Extent of this new Commandment of Our Blessed Saviour's, shewing the Manner how we ought to Love one another.

II. The Pleasure and Happiness resulting from the Practice of it.

III. The Reward annex'd to the Practice of this new Commandment.

IV. An Exhortation to our Continuance in the Practice of it.

(a) Exod. xx. 13. (b) — 15. (c) — xx. 15. (d) — 16. (e) — 17. (f) Rom. xiii. 7. (g) St. Matt. xxii. 21. (h) Just. Instit. Tit. i. § 3. Juris præcepta sunt honeste vivere, alterum non lædere, suum cuique tribuere. Bracton. Lib. i. Cap. iii. 2. Justitia est constans & perpetua voluntas suum cuique tribuens. (i) Exod. xx. 8. (k) — 12. (l) Rom. xiii. 8. Gal. v. 14. Jam. ii. 21. (m) St. John xiii. 1. — xvii. 1. (n) — xiii. 17. — xv. 14. (o) St. Matt. xxv. 21.

I. The

I. *The Extent of this new Commandment, &c.*

And this may most justly be computed from the *Giver* of it himself to extend to *all Mankind in general*; not only to *Friends* but to *Enemies* also, and to every *Dénomination* of them whatsoever; thus expressing himself in (a) his excellent Sermon on the Mount, *ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, and hate thy Enemy: (b) But I say unto you, Love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do Good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you: That ye may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven.*

No Enemy to be exempted from our Love, as *Christians*: None that *curse* us, to be had in any other Regard than that of our *blessing* them; None that *hate* us, to be any otherwise dealt withall, than by our returning *Good for their Evil*; and, according to *St. Paul's Exhortation*, (c) *by overcoming Evil with Good, by (d) heaping Coals of Fire on his Head, thereby compelling our Enemies to become our Friends, by a Repetition of our own good Actions towards them.* Vincit malos pertinax Bonitas, Bona.

No other Return to be made to those that *despitefully use us, and persecute us*, than our Prayers to God for their *Conversion*, begging God in the Words of our *Saviour*, praying for his *Crucifiers*, and saying, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what to do.* St. Luke xxiii. 34.

The Charity of a *Christian* ought to be *universal*: “(e) No Bounds ought to be fixed to the Extent of its Love; for it loves the *Small* and the *Great*, the *Poor* and the *Rich*, the *Miserable* and the *Happy*, the *Morose* and the *Complaisant*, the *Stranger* and the *Domestick*, him that *deserves to be beloved*, and he that *does not at all deserve it*; in which Respect it is, after a Manner, like unto God, who distributes his Gifts to those who are *worthy* of them, and to those who are *unworthy*; who scatters his Light upon the *Just* and upon the *Unjust*: In fine, this *Virtue* does equally embrace all the World; it is an *Universal Spirit*—

(a) Contain'd in the 5th, 6th, and 7th Chapters of St. Matthew. (b) — V. 44, 45.

(c) Rom. xiii. ult. (d) — xii. 20. (e) *Monf. Rapin's Spirit of Christianity*, p. 27, 28.

rit, which knows none of these *carnal* and *beathenish* Distinctions
 of *Engagement, Interest, a Party* and a *Cabal* of *Paul* and *Cephas*,
 which at present divide so many *little narrow Souls* in the *World* ;
 for according to the Judgment of *St. Austin*, [a] *To love all Men,*
and to pretend to except one only, with whom we are not altogether
satisfied, and whom we cannot endure for certain Reasons, this is not
to love as a Christian."

Thus ought our Love to each other to be as universal as our
 Blessed Saviour's *Passion* for us all, who (b) *tasted Death for every*
Man, and in Imitation of that, let us (c) *do Good unto all Men.*

Thus, as our Love towards one another ought to be *Universal*, so
 ought it to be *sincere* also, according to *St. (d) John's* Exhortation :
Let us not love (says he) *in Word, neither in Tongue, but in Deed and*
in Truth, and according to that of *St. (e) Peter's*, *See that you love*
one another with a pure Heart fervently.

How wide is the *Difference* between *Human Love*, or Love for the
 Sake of *Man*, or *ourselves* ; and that of *Divine Love*, or Love for
 the Sake of *Christ* !

The (f) Character of *Human Love* consists only in *Complements,*
in Civilities, in Offers of Service, in Protestations of Friendship, in
forc'd Complaisances, in false Confidences, in vain Words, in de-
ceitful Promises, and in all the other Disguises which make up the
 common Conversation of the Men in this World : But *Christian*
Charity does never *dissemble*, for it says nothing but what it *thinks*, it
thinks nothing but what it *feels*, it *feels* nothing but what it would
 put in *Execution* : It's *Words* never give the *Lye* to it's *Actions*,
 and it's *Actions* are always agreeable to it's *Sentiments*, because it
 is *essentially sincere*, and has no Way of explaining itself but by
 it's *Works*."

What a Charm of Love is there in *Sincerity of Friendship* ! A
 Friendship united with no other View, but that of *Love, and Friend-*
ship's Sake, and those founded upon the *Basis of Religious Principles.*

(a) Lib. 1. de Doctr. Christiana. (b) Heb. ii. 9. St. Joh. xv. 32. Rom. v. 18.
 (d) Gal. vi. 10. (d) 1 Joh. iii. 18. (e) 1 Pet. i. 22. (f) Rapin's Spirit of Christi-
 anity, p. 29.

In such a Case, we may justly say with the Son of (a) *Sirach*, that *Nothing doth countervail a faithful Friend, and his Excellency is invaluable.*

If *Abraham* was call'd a (b) *Friend of God* for his *Fidelity* towards him, and if our Blessed Saviour has pronounced us his (c) *Friends*, if we do whatsoever he commands us, how justly may sincere Christians express themselves in the Words of the Son of (d) *Sirach*, and say, that *he that hath found such an one, hath found a Treasure*; and further adds, that *a faithful Friend is the Medicine of Life, and they that fear the Lord shall find him.*

And who can be more properly said to fear the Lord, than those who study to love and to obey him? And who must of Consequence fulfil this *New Commandment* of our Blessed Saviour's, and thereby be intitled to the Character of being his Disciples: *By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another.*

As therefore we are (e) *taught of God to love one another*; so, in order to that, let all Obstacles be first removed; (f) *Let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and evil Speaking, be put away from you, with all Malice; and be we kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's Sake, hath forgiven you.*

Which shall conclude the first Point. I come now to consider, in the Second Place,

II. *The PLEASURE and HAPPINESS resulting from the PRACTICE of this NEW COMMANDMENT.*

As there is nothing that can bring so great Satisfaction to our Souls, in general, as a Sense of our having done our Duty, so have we no more easy and pleasant Duty to be perform'd, than this of our Blessed Saviour's *New Commandment*, whereby we shall be entitl'd to the *Love and Society* of God the Father, and God the Son: For thus asserts our Blessed (g) Saviour himself; *If a Man love me, he will keep my Words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our Abode with him.*

(a) Eccles. vi. 15. (b) Jam. ii. 3. (c) St. Joh. xv. 14. (d) Eccles. vi. 14. — 16.
(e) 1 Theff. iv. 9. (f) Eph. iv. 31, 32. (g) St. Joh. xiv. 23.

St. (a) Paul exhorts us to *speake Evil of no Man, to be no Brawlers, but gentle, shewing all Meekness unto all Men*: And truly there are no Persons so well qualified, to receive and practice this *New Commandment*, as the *meek and humble Spirits*, who are entitled to the *Blessings and Happiness of the Life present*, and also of the *Life to come*, (b) *Godliness having a Promise of both*.

Blessed are the Meek, says our Saviour, *for they shall inherit the Earth*.

(c) *Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*; for God giveth Grace to the *Humble*. Jam. iv. 6.

All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with Humility, exhorts St. (d) Peter: And if *Humility be the Seed-Plot of all other Virtues* (as is asserted by the most pious and learned Dr. (e) Hammond) then is it a proper Receptacle of this *New Commandment* of our Blessed Saviour's.

There then can (f) *no Root of Bitterness* be springing up, but all must be *Love*, and all *Respect* to our *Equals*, and all *Obedience* to our *Superiors*.

There then cannot that *Pride*, that is hated and abominated by God and Man, be entertained, but all would, in (g) *Lowliness of Mind*, esteem others better than themselves.

And by *Gentleness, Affability, and Courteousness*, may the Souls of the *Great* be distinguished from those of the *proud and conceited Vulgar*, who will rarely be brought to more Understanding than that with which they were born; for *he that is not wise, will not be taught*: There would that *Peace and Serenity of Mind* make all the Possessors of it happy, according to Jer. ix. 4. *Thou shalt keep him in perfect Peace, whose Mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee*: Whilst, on the contrary, those that forget their God ---- neglect their Duty to him ---- and scoff at and contemn, all Religion, and it's Professors, (h) *those are like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt*. There is no Peace, saith my God, *to the Wicked*.

(a) Tit. iii. 2. (b) 1 Tim. iv. 8. (c) St. Matt. V. 5. — V. 3. (d) 1 Pet. V. 7. (e) Pract. Cat. p. 14. (f) Heb. xii. 15. (g) Phil. ii. 3. (h) Isai. lvii. 20, 21. — xlviii. 22.

Nothing

Nothing but a *Scene of Misery* presents itself to them in the *Life present*, and is an Earnest of eternal Misery in the *World to come*: (a) *The Wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the Nations that forget God.* Such as (b) *these shall go into everlasting Punishment.*

But how contrary this to all the Professors of the Christian Name!

In them is found nothing but *the Wisdom which is from above*, which *St. James* (c) describes to be *first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, without Partiality and without Hypocrisy.*

The Son of *Sirach* informing us by what Means he acquired his great Wisdom, assures us, saying, (d) *I directed my Soul unto her, and I found her in Pureness.*

In *Pureness of Heart* towards God, whereby we are assured of (e) *seeing God*; in *Pureness of Love* towards our Neighbour, whereby we are assured of *pleasing God*, according to the reasoning of *St. John*, 1 Jo. iv. 16. *God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

The Author of the Book of Wisdom assures us that (f) *Wisdom is a loving Spirit*, and that it (g) *will not enter into a malicious Soul, nor dwell in a Body that is subject to Sin*; and *St. Paul* sufficiently confirms it, by asserting, that (h) *the Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-Suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, and Temperance*; asserting further, that against such there is no Law; but, on the contrary, both the *Divine* and *Human Laws* conspire together towards the *Encouragement, Assistance, and Protection* of all sincerely pious *Christians*; who, among their other Duties, shew it in their *Duty, Love, and Obedience* to their (i) *Sovereign*, and to all that are put in Authority under him in the *State*, and to their (k) *Bishops*, and to all that are put in Authority under them in the *Church*; Church and State being harmoniously united with each other, and God grant that they may for ever so continue!

The *Human Laws* were originally instituted for the Sake of the *Protection and Support of the Divine Laws*, (l) *for the Punishment of Evil Doers, and for the Praise of them that do well.*

(a) Psal. ix. 17. (b) St. Matt. xxv. ult. (c) Jam. iii. 17. (d) Ecclesi. li. 20.
(e) St. Matt. v. 8. (f) Wisd. i. 6. (g) Wisd. i. 4. (h) Gal. v. 22 (i) Rom. xiii.
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. (k) Phil. i. 1. Heb. xiii. 17. 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. (l) Rom.
xiii. 3.

Wherefore

Wherefore, my Beloved, (a) *Let us not be weary in well-doing*, and let us look upon the *Laws* as such as (b) *will be faithful to us as an Oracle*, and will support and encourage us in every Thing that is just and good, (c) *Rulers being not a Terror to good Works, but to the evil*.

By a Parity of reasoning, therefore, with St. Paul, if we are at any Time engaged in any Affair, to which *Rulers wou'd be a Terror*, we are not then engaged in good Works. (d)

Vir bonus est Quis? Qui Consulta Patrum, qui Leges juraque servat.

For if the *Piety, Wisdom, Knowledge, Judgment, Experience, Reason*, and *Prudence* of the *Legislature*, compounded of both our Ecclesiastical and Civil Superiors, and those united together in their *Prayers* and *Suffrages* for the Publick Good in every Respect, be called in Question, how absurd a Thing is it to imagine that a few *injudicious, unwise, head-strong, and unexperienced* Persons can be proper Directors in our *Rule of Life*?

To give only two single Instances; the one in *publick*, the other in *private Life*. As to the *former*, How often have we seen several *worthy Persons* offering their Service to their *King and Country* in *Parliament*, (each of which wou'd be a proper Representative) and how often have they felt the intolerable Burthen of (e) *Fools fill'd with Meats*, (as Solomon expresses it) when nothing is to be seen or heard but *Rioting and Drunkenness, Chambering and Wantonness, Strife and Envy, Hatred, Malice*, and all *Uncharitableness*; they *bateful and bating one another*, not forbearing to slander and reproach those very *Persons* who offer their Service for the *Publick Good*: And if any the least *Flaw* has at any Time been found in their *Ancestors*, their *innocent Posterity* shall assuredly suffer, and have it aggravated with all the *malicious Circumstances* imaginable; which, perhaps, may not cease till conveyed down to *Children yet unborn*: If no *real Flaw* can be found, their *Wickedness* will rather maliciously *invent an imaginary one*, than they shall be permitted to *escape without Slander*.

Another Circumstance there is in these *publick Elections*, which seems to bear hardest upon the *best and most conscientious Persons*, who

(a) Gal. vi. 9. (b) Eccles. xxxiii. 3. (c) Rom. xiii. 3. (d) Juvenal. (e) Prov. xxx. 22.

must be frequently obliged either to vote *against* their *Inclinations*, or to be *depriv'd* of their *Subsistence*, which has oftentimes been the deplorable Case.

But may it not be offer'd to the *Wisdom* and *Judgment* of the *Legislature*, whether those *Riots* and *Tumults* may not be *diminished*, in some Measure, if not *totally suppress'd*, by instituting *ballotting* (or chusing by *Balls* or *Lots*) instead of *voting*, (or chusing by *Voices*) when every one wou'd be permitted to *ballot* according as he wou'd be (a) *fully persuaded in his own Mind*, without *Compulsion*, and no *malicious* nor *scandalous Reflections* cast upon any of the *worthy Candidates*.

The other Instance, that of *private Life*, is to be accounted for in a shorter Space, because it chiefly falls on the Offender himself; for as *publick Slander* discharges itself, and in some Measure *evaporates* into the *Air*, so *private Slander* brings down the Wrath of God upon the Slanderer, whom God has promised to *cut off*, Pl. ci. 5. and the Son of (b) *Sirach* assures us, *that whoso hearkeneth unto it, shall never find Rest, and never dwell quietly*: And if he cannot be at *Ease* and *Quiet in himself*, how can others of his *Society* and *Conversation* expect so to be?

A *sinful Man*, saith the Son of (c) *Sirach*, *disquieteth Friends, and maketh Debate among them that are at Peace*; whereby he renders himself hateful to God and Man; for as we are assured from St. James, saying, (d) *If any Man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his Tongue, but deceiveth his own Heart, this Man's Religion is in vain*; so says (e) *Solomon*, *A Whisperer separateth chief Friends*; and the Son of (f) *Sirach* asserts, saying, *A Whisperer defileth his own Soul, and is hated wheresoever he dwelleth*.

How widely distant are these Practices, and all others that give *Disquietude* and *Uneasiness* to all *virtuous Persons*, from this *new Commandment* of our Blessed Saviour's, who requires all his Followers to *love one another with a pure Heart fervently*, (as is before observed) and not only to avoid giving Offence, or doing Evil, but also to (g) *abstain from all Appearance of Evil*, (as related by St. Paul) and to love one another, and that in the same Degree that he hath loved us: *A new Commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another, as I have*

(a) Rom. xiv. 5. (b) Eccles. xxviii. 16. (c) Eccles. xxviii. 9. (d) Jam. i. 26.
(e) Prov. xvi. 28. (f) Eccles. xxi. 28. (g) 1 Theff. V. 22.

loved you, that ye also love one another : Which shall conclude the second Point. I come now in the third Place to shew,

III. The Reward annexed to the Practice of this New Commandment.

And that is not only to have the *Pleasure* and *Satisfaction* of bearing the *Character* of being *Christ's Disciples*, but also to be entitled to the *Reward* of being such.

By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another.

And the *Reward* naturally follows, (a) *If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his Love is perfected in us.*

How great a *Reward*, for how great a *Pleasure* !

Thus may we observe the *earthly Canaan* to be the truest Way to obtain the *Heavenly*.

The *Love* of each other, like all other (b) *Ways of Wisdom, are Ways of Pleasantness, and Paths of Peace.*

Were we barely even but to conceive only that the *Love of God* is perfected in us, and that for so easy and pleasant a Duty, how shou'd we adore the *Goodness of God*, for rewarding us with so heavenly a *Pleasure*, whilst we are here on *Earth* !

With how great a *Contempt* and *Pity* shou'd we then look down on all those Things and Persons that now give *Disturbance* and *Inquietude* to our *Minds* !

How shou'd we look above the petty *Anger, Malice, Lyes* and *Slanders* of such as now *distract our Peace*, and discompose the *Serenity* and *Tranquillity* of our *Souls* !

How good a *Pattern* have we to look up unto, and to attempt to imitate ; who, though he (c) *did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth*, yet, when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.

When the *Jews* inveighed against our *Blessed Saviour* with that reproachful Assertion, (d) *Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a Devil ?* He gave 'em no other *Return*, than by meekly denying the *Charge*, saying, *I have not a Devil ; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.* He took no Notice of their malicious *Ignorance*,

(a) 1 John iv. 12. (b) Prov. i. 17. (c) 1 Pet. ii. 22, 23. (d) St. John viii. 48, 49.

rance, their *Prejudices*, and their *Passions*, but permitted all their *Wickedness* to fall on their own Heads.

Wou'd we Christians give ourselves the Liberty of condescending to be directed by the reasoning of the *moral Philosophers* only, they wou'd so reason with us, as sometimes to make us ashamed of ourselves.

(a) *Epictetus* reasons thus with us: *When any one does you an Injury, or reflects upon your good Name, consider with yourself that he does this out of a Persuasion that it is no more than what you deserve, and what becomes him to say or do: And it cannot be expected, that your Opinion of Things, but his own, shou'd give Law to his Behaviour. Now, if that Opinion of his be erroneous, the Misfortune is not your's, but his who is thus led into Mistakes concerning you; for the Truth of a Proposition is not shaken one whit by a Man's supposing it to be false; the Consequence is not the worse, but the Person that judges amiss of it is. Such Considerations as these, may serve to dispose you to Patience and Meekness; and, by Degrees, you will be able to bear the most scurrilous Reproaches, and think the bitterest and most insolent Traducer worth no other Return than this mild Answer; These, it seems, are his Thoughts of you, and it is not strange that this Man shou'd vent his Opinion freely, and act according to it.*

In how few Words did our Blessed Saviour comprehend all this Way of reasoning, when he pray'd to God on the Cross for his very Crucifiers: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!* St. Luke, 23. 34.

And how far do we Christians degenerate from this great Exemplar, when we permit evil speaking, lying, and slandering, so far to get the Dominion over us, as to give us any, even the least Disquietude of Mind? And do we not daily (or at least ought daily to) pray to our Father which is in Heaven, to forgive those who have offended us, as freely as we wou'd have Forgiveness at his Hands?

What then have we further to do, but expect Forgiveness from the Hands of God, for our own Offences, as a sure Reward of our forgiving those who have transgressed against us?

The Son of Sirach assures us, that lying is a certain Sign of such as have been vulgarly born, or vulgarly bred, or whose Conversation is chiefly among such. (a) *A Lye is a foul Blot in a Man's* (says he) *yet it is continually in the Mouth of the Untaught.*

(a) *Epict.* Ch. lxiv. Ed. Engl. Stanb. (b) *Ecclesi.* xx. 24. — xxv. 2.

And shall the Conversation of such gain any Influence upon those whose Duty it is to be *looking unto Jesus*, and studying to imitate his Example?

(a) *Let us therefore consider him who endured such Contradictions of Sinners against himself, lest we be wearied and faint in our Minds.*

GOD himself has assigned all (b) *Lyars to the Lake which burns with Fire and Brimstone*; but to us Christians it appertains to pray with the Church, *That it may please him to forgive our Enemies, Persecutors, and Slanderers, and to turn their Hearts*;—there being no Sinners of any Kind whatsoever that stand in greater Need of our Prayers, than such: As these, and such as these, not only give Disquietude of Mind to *private Persons, private Families, virtuous Men, and pious Women*, but also are the Occasion of *publick Troubles, publick Wars, Devastation, and Blood-shed, depopulating Towns and Cities, and laying whole Countries and Cities waste*; it equals the worst to the best of Men, and imposes upon all Mankind; so that it may justly be asserted, that a *lying and slanderous Tongue* ought not only not to be named among Christians, but ought to be shunned as the very Pest and Bane of Christianity, and ought to be proscrib'd all Human Conversation.

LORD, who shall dwell in thy Tabernacle, or who shall rest upon thy holy Hill, asks the holy (c) Psalmist, by Way of Erotesis, or Question, presuming to interrogate his God: *What Mortal, of the whole Creation, is qualified to appear acceptably in the Presence of his God, in the Place of common Worship, or at his holy Altar?* And immediately replies and solves the Question, saying, (d) *He that walketh uprightly, and worketh Righteousness, and speaketh the Truth from his Heart*: (e) *He that backbiteth not with his Tongue, nor doth Evil to his Neighbour, nor taketh up a Reproach against his Neighbour*; or, as we have it in the old Translation, *he that hath not slandered his Neighbour*. These, and such as these, are the best Qualifications to await on the God of Love, of Justice, of Peace, and of Truth; and none but such as these are qualified to obtain his Favour here, or to enter into his Glory hereafter.

(a) Heb. xii. 3.

(b) Rev. xxi. 8.

(c) Ps. xv. 1.

(d) — 2.

(e) — 3.

Wherefore

Wherefore we are exhorted by St. Paul (f) in the following Words saying, *Let Love be without Dissimulation, (admitting of no Fraud no secondary Views, no Double-dealing, or Hypocrisy in our Hearts,) abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good; (a) be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly Love, in Honour preferring one another.*

How exactly agreeable this to the Words of my Text? *A new Commandment, &c.*

And this shall bring me in the 4th and last Place to conclude with

IV. *An Exhortation to our Continuance in the Practice of Brotherly Love.*

As our Blessed Saviour exhorted us, by his *new Commandment*, to *love one another*, so are we exhorted by the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, to the Continuance of it: (b) *Let Brotherly Love continue.*

If therefore we have *any Regard* to the Commandment of our Blessed Saviour, if we have *any Desire* to be called *his Disciples*, and to be rewarded as such; if the *happiest Life* that we can enjoy in this World, and that only a *fore-runner of eternal Happiness*, and the *Enjoyment* of our GOD and SAVIOUR to *eternal Ages*, be of any *Value* in our *Eyes*, or of any *Esteem* in our *Hearts*, let us gladly embrace it, and sincerely continue in the Practice of it.

Who then! what then! shall separate us from the Love of Christ? And what can *more effectually* obtain that Love, than *our Love one to another*?

Therefore, let us first of all study to cleanse our own Hearts, and then shall we be the better qualified to find out the *Defects* of our Christian Brethren: (c) *Let us first cast out the Beam out of our own Eyes, and then shall we see clearly to cast out the Mote out of our Brother's Eye.*

Let us first of all entertain *Quietness Calmness, Ease, and Tranquillity*, within our own Breasts, and then we shall plainly see from whence proceed the *discomposed Spirits* and *diseased Minds* of our Brethren.

Let the *Rectitude* of Soul both in *Thought, Word, and Deed*, be practic'd by ourselves, so shall we give *good Examples* to others; and what we cannot *influence* others to *imitate*, let us commend to the *Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness* of God to *reform*.

(a) Rom. xii. 9. — 10. (b) Heb. xiii. 1. (c) St. Matt. viii. 5.

The *divine Tho. à Kempis* (a) has prescribed to us *four Rules*, which, he assures us, will give us much Peace; and truly they seem to have so much of the *true Spirit of Christianity* in them, as must win the Love and Favour both of GOD and MAN.

First, says he, *Study rather to let another have his Will, than yourself to be bent upon your own.*

Our own Desires, our own Aversions, our own Wills, our own Passions, our own Conceits, and Imaginations, Jealousies, and Suspicions, undoubtedly giving the first Disturbance to the Tranquillity of our Mind; and whether proceeding from Disease, (as is more frequently the latent Cause, than we are generally aware of) or from any other Motive, our first Study should be to preserve that Rectitude of Mind, that Christian Disposition, that wou'd entitle us to the Denomination of being Christ's Disciples.

Secondly, says he, *Chuse rather to have less than more.*

From whence come all the Frauds, the Underminings, the Thefts, the Robberies, the Discontents among Friends and Relations, the Law-Suits, Plunderings, Rebellions, and innumerable other Wickednesses, but from an eager and insatiable Desire after more, and still more, and still more, to the Neglect of our Duty to God, and of the Salvation of our Souls.

Whereas, that is sufficient for us that God has given us, if we will do our Duty in that State of Life in which God has been pleased to call us, whereby we shall obtain his Blessing on that and ourselves.

If we (b) cast our Care on him, he will care for us: If we (c) seek first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, all worldly Necessaries and Conveniencies shall be added to us. (d) A Man's Life (or the Happiness of it) consisteth not in the Abundance of the Things which he possesseth, says St. Luke: No, assuredly! But it consists in a (e) perfect Contentment with what God has bestowed upon us, and in all possible Thanks to him for even the least of all his Mercies.

And this is the surest Method of inclining our God to give us what further he shall see most fit for us.

(a) *Tho. à Kempis*, Lib. iii., Cap. 23.

(b) 1 Pet. v. 7.

(c) St. Matt. vi. 33.

(d) Luke xii. 15. (e) 1 Tim. vi. 18.

Thirdly, says he, Always seek the lowest Place, and to be inferior to every body.

How like is this to the Practice of our Blessed Saviour himself! Who, though (a) *God incarnate*, yet took upon himself the (b) *Form of a Servant*, and was willing to be accounted the *lowest*, and *meanest* of all.

What a wide Distance is there between the (c) *proud and haughty Scorners*, and the *Poor in Spirit*, the one puff'd up with *Tumor*, and *high Conceit*, blustering at every *Disappointment*, and disappointed at every Thing that is not according to his own *Will*: Whereas the other is *easy, satisfied, and contented* with whatsoever *Lot and Portion* Providence has or shall be pleased to assign him.

What is more coveted in the World, than *high Places*, and *Precedence*? Frequently imagining, that their high Stations give a *Sanction* to the Merit of the Possessors of them.

Whereas our Blessed Saviour ascribes the lowest Places to all his Followers, and assures them that the (d) *most humble* are the most likely to be exalted.

Fourthly, says he, Wish always and pray that the Will of God may be wholly performed in thee.

And such can never fail of being under the immediate *Inspection* and *Protection* of the Almighty, who has promised to have the Care of such as cast their Care upon him, as having no Will of their own, but such as is in an entire Conformity to the *Will and Wisdom* of their GOD.

They justly reason with themselves, That as God created the World, he certainly is the *fittest* to dispose of all that is in it; as shall seem most agreeable to his own *Will and Pleasure*.

If *Prosperity* comes on, he says, (e) *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name be the Praise.*

If *Adversity*, (f) *Not what I will, but what thou wilt.* Thus, whether in *Prosperity* or in *Adversity*, whether in *Health* or in *Sickness*, whether in *Life* or in *Death*, whatsoever succeeds is always right, because always admitted to be in *Conformity to the Will of God*.

(a) Tim. iii. 16. (b) Phil. ii. 7. (c) Prov. xxi. 24. (d) St. Matt. v. 3.
St. Matt. xxiii. 12. (e) Ps. cxv. 1. (f) St. Mark xiv. 36.

A Mind thus prepared to follow these Rules, must think it the greatest Pleasure, as it really is, to embrace this *new Commandment* of our Blessed Lord and Saviour's, of *loving one another*, and that not only in *Word*, but in *Deed* and in *Truth*, even as our Blessed Saviour loved his Disciples.

So shall we live an *happy Life*, so shall we die an *happy Death*, so shall we enjoy a *blessed Resurrection to Life eternal*, and be intitled to the Sentence of *Come ye blessed Children of my Father, receive the Kingdom prepared for you from the Beginning of the World.*

And that this may be the Lot and Portion of all here present, GOD of his infinite Mercy grant for the Sake of the HOLY JESUS. *To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascrib'd, as is most due all Honour and Praise, Dominion and Power, both now and for ever, A M E N.*

E N D

